



Lessons from Elijah's Life

Elijah Anointed Elisha (pt.2)

Date: 22 April 2020

Text: 1 Kings 19:15-21

Key Lesson: God is still seeking men to preach the Word.

Elisha's Call to Preach (v.19)

Obedying God's orders, Elijah, having found Elisha, walked out into the freshly ploughed field. As Elisha's oxen pulled their plough passed where Elijah was standing, he took his old hairy mantle and cast it upon Elisha's shoulders. In those days, this act was a symbol of God's call.

God does not give us many details of that mid-field event. Had Elijah greeted Elisha and the other farmers? We do not know. We can assume, however, that Elisha recognised Elijah as the prophet of God. This is obvious by his response.

God does not call preachers in the same way today. As we look in the New Testament, we note that the local church chose the first deacons after evaluating their qualifications. The Holy Spirit prompted the local church to send out Paul and Barnabas, who were active in the local church, as the first missionaries. Paul chose young Timothy as his apprentice in the ministry, and God eventually called him to preach.

Parents cannot call their son to preach. Pastors cannot call men to preach. Men ought to volunteer, but only the Spirit of God can call a man to preach. The call to preach is a sober call that one must not take lightly. When a man senses the call to preach, it must be God's call. I believe it is wise for his pastor to have him preach frequently in his local church and allow the congregation to evaluate God's call on his life.

Elisha Answered God's Call (v.20)

He left his oxen there in the field and ran after Elijah. Notice his first recorded words to Elijah. He did not question the call. He did not make excuses. He simply asked permission to tell his family goodbye before leaving. He was not trying to delay his departure. He was treating his family with respect.

We cannot help but wonder what God had been doing in the heart of Elisha to prepare him for this sudden change of vocation. Had the LORD burdened his heart to do something for the Lord to revive his wayward nation? Had he been praying for the LORD's direction in his life? Had he offered the LORD his services? We do not know, but we do know that without hesitation, he answered God's call.

Advice that I heard in my youth was, "If God calls you to be a preacher, do not stoop to become a king." The call to preach is one of the greatest callings a man can receive.

Elijah answered Elisha's request to say goodbye to his family, "Go back again: for what have I done to thee?" What did he mean? Evidently, he had not said a word to Elisha. Elijah had not called him; it was the call of God and the inner stirring of the Holy Spirit. Elijah's job was to anoint Elisha (1Ki 19:16).

Elisha Burned the Bridges behind Him (v.21)

Elisha turned back, called his family together, killed his team of oxen, used the oxen yoke and tools to make a fire and boiled the oxen to feed his family and friends. Certainly, this was symbolic of his forsaking farming and becoming a prophet of the Lord. Having killed his oxen and burned their equipment, he could not go back to using them again. In a sense, he crossed the bridge and burned it behind him.

For Elisha, answering God's call was not an experiment. It was not a trial. It was a life-long commitment to serve God with his life. Moses answered God's call at the burning bush. Jeremiah answered God's call in his youth. Paul answered God's call on the road to Damascus.

In Ezekiel's day, God said, "And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it: but I found none." (Ezekiel 22:30). Today, God is still looking for men who will preach His Word. God's part is to do the calling. Our part is to volunteer.

Contrary to popular charismatic opinion, God in His wisdom chose men to be preachers not women. In 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 God said, "Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak... it is a shame for women to speak in the church." (1 Timothy 2:12) "But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence." In 1 Timothy 3:1 says, "If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work." All through that section, God used the masculine pronoun. God is not saying that women are ignorant. Many women are highly intelligent. He is not saying that they lack ability. Many women are talented speakers. God is simply saying that he chose to place the man in the leadership position not the woman. God does not forbid women to teach other women or children, but it is not God's will for them to preach to men.

When did Elijah Anoint Hazael and Jehu? (v.15-16)

The Bible does not say that Elijah ever fulfilled these two duties. It appears that God told him about them so that he could prepare Elisha for the task when the time was right. Eventually, these duties were actually carried out by Elisha whom Elijah anointed to be his successor, 2Ki 8:10-13; 2Ki 9:1-7.